

Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP)



Office of the State
Long-Term Care
Ombudsman

Promoting Quality - Protecting Rights

*Serving the Jurisdictions of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun,
through their Area Agencies on Aging*



THE UPDATE

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National Senior Citizens Day

August 21st is National Senior Citizens Day! This day is an opportunity to celebrate the wisdom and achievements senior citizens have made, as well as to advocate for the rights of older people throughout the world. President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the first National Senior Citizens Day in 1988, and this day is now a "holiday" that is celebrated annually. On this day, we are encouraged to recognize and show appreciation for the value and contribution of elderly people to home, family and society. In his explanation, Reagan wrote,

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“Throughout our history, older people have achieved much for our families, our communities, and our country. That remains true today, and gives us ample reason this year to reserve a special day in honor of the senior citizens who mean so much to our land.”

National Senior Citizens day is the perfect opportunity to do something that will brighten the day of a senior in your life. Here are some ideas on how to celebrate this special day:

- ◇ Mail a handwritten card to a senior.
- ◇ Pick up the phone and call an elderly friend or loved one.
- ◇ Volunteer at a long-term care facility.
- ◇ Take your elderly parent, grandparent, or friend out to dinner (many restaurants offer a special senior citizen discount to honor the day!).
- ◇ Offer to take an elderly neighbor to the store or to help them around the house.
- ◇ Spend time with your elderly relatives playing one of their favorite games or asking them about favorite memories.
- ◇ If you are a senior citizen yourself, check for special giveaways and promotions at your favorite shops and restaurants!

“For all they have achieved throughout life and for all they continue to accomplish, we owe older citizens our thanks and a heartfelt salute. We can best demonstrate our gratitude and esteem by making sure that our communities are good places in which to mature and grow older -- places in which older people can participate to the fullest and can find the encouragement, acceptance, assistance, and services they need to continue to lead lives of independence and dignity.”

- Proclamation 5847 -- National Senior Citizens Day, 1988.



Program Changes

As of July 1, 2013 the jurisdiction of Prince William will no longer participate in the regional program of the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP). The jurisdiction of Prince William includes Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park, Virginia. The decision to have a separate Long-Term Care Ombudsman regional program was made by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors in the Fiscal 2014 Budget as adopted on April 23, 2013.

The Prince William local long-term care ombudsman will be located at the PW Area Agency on Aging:

Daphne Van Tien

Prince William Area Agency on Aging

5 County Complex Ct., Suite 240

Woodbridge, VA 22192-9201

office: 703-792-7662

fax: 703-792-7155

The NVLTCOP team wishes the Prince William jurisdiction's residents, the new Ombudsman, the volunteer ombudsmen and the provider staff well in their future endeavors.

National Immunization Awareness Month

August is **National Immunization Awareness Month**. This month is the perfect time to remind the older adults in our lives to get caught up on their shots. Many people think that only young children need to get vaccinated. However, each year, thousands of older adults die or have serious complications from vaccine-preventable diseases. According to the Administration on Aging, in 2008 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that adults age 65 and older comprised 90 percent of deaths that occur every year from complications related to influenza and pneumonia.

Vaccinations help older people protect themselves from getting influenza, pneumonia and other illnesses. When older adults get infected, they can have more severe illnesses than younger people. Vaccines help prevent dangerous and sometimes deadly diseases. Even if you were vaccinated at a younger age, the immunity from those vaccines can wear off. In addition, the virus or bacteria that the vaccine protects against can change over time, so your resistance may not be as strong.

Older adults are especially vulnerable to certain diseases, such as influenza and pneumonia. This is because as we get older, our immune systems tend to weaken over time, which puts us at higher risk of infectious diseases. Vaccines can help boost the immune system to decrease the risk of older adults getting vaccine-preventable diseases.

Which vaccinations should an older adult get to guard themselves against serious illnesses? According to the CDC older adults need vaccinations to protect themselves against the following diseases:

- Seasonal Influenza (Also, anyone 6 months or older can benefit from a flu vaccine)

- Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough) (for adults up to 64 years, one lifetime dose)
- Shingles (for adults 60 years and older)
- Pneumococcal disease (for adults 65 years and older and adults with specific health conditions)

If you are unsure whether or not you need an immunization, you can check the Adult Immunization Schedule available on the CDC website: www.cdc.gov/vaccines. This schedule is updated regularly so you can learn of new vaccines that are developed through this schedule. The most recent update to the schedule is the shingles vaccine, which is for adults 60 years and older. You can also talk with your doctor to find out if there are other vaccines that you may need.



Tips for Staying Safe in the Heat



Hot weather can be dangerous, especially for older adults. Older adults are particularly at risk for developing heat-related illness because the ability to adequately respond to summer heat can become less efficient with age.

The National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has some advice for helping older people avoid heat problems during the summer months. A person's risk for hyperthermia (heat-related illness) is not based only on the outside temperature — it includes the general health and lifestyle of the individual.

Health factors that may increase risk include:

- ♦ High blood pressure or other conditions that require changes in diet
- ♦ The inability to perspire
- ♦ Taking several drugs for various conditions
- ♦ Being substantially overweight or underweight
- ♦ Drinking alcoholic beverages
- ♦ Being dehydrated

Lifestyle factors can also increase risk, including extremely hot living spaces, lack of transportation, overdressing, visiting overcrowded places and not understanding weather conditions. Older people, particularly those at special risk, should stay indoors on particularly hot and humid days. People without fans or air conditioners should seek out cooler places to go.

A person with any symptoms of a heat-related illness, especially an older adult, should seek immediate medical attention. Here are a few tips on what to do if you suspect someone is suffering from a heat-related illness:

- ♦ Get the person out of the sun and into an air-conditioned or other cool place
- ♦ Offer fluids such as water, fruit and vegetable juices, but avoid alcohol and caffeine
- ♦ Encourage the individual to shower, bathe or sponge off with cool water
- ♦ Apply a cold, wet cloth to the wrists and/or neck
- ♦ Urge the person to lie down and rest, preferably in a cool place

For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

Need Information or Have a Concern About Nursing or Assisted Living Facilities?

Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

12011 Government Center Parkway,
Suite 708

Fairfax, VA 22035

Offices hours are Monday through Friday
from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Intake Line: 703-324-5861 TTY: 711

Fax: 703-324-3575

Email us at:

NVLT COP@FairfaxCounty.Gov

To view information on the NVLT COP website and to see the Investigation and Complaint Log, please go to:

www.FairfaxCounty.Gov/LTCOmbudsman

What an Ombudsman does:

- ♦ **Advocates** for improving the quality of life for persons receiving long-term care services
- ♦ **Resolves complaints** against long-term care providers through **counseling, negotiation, and investigation**
- ♦ **Provides information** about long-term care providers to help make an informed decision
- ♦ **Educates** the community about long-term care issues
- ♦ **Visits** residents of long-term care facilities on a weekly basis through our volunteer program
- ♦ **Trains** long-term care staff on long-term care related information
- ♦ **Consults** with providers



Volunteer Ombudsman Spotlight—Fred Churchill

I have been the Ombudsman for Tall Oaks at Reston, an Assisted Living Facility, since October, 2009. Having retired in 2007, I tried several volunteer positions before finding the Ombudsman Program through internet searches. It sounded like a great program that would allow me to make a contribution and also be personally challenging; I have not been disappointed.

My interest in assisting the elderly started in the early 80s when both of my parents, living in our family home in Kingsport, TN, were in declining health and faced important care decisions. With my older brother living on the Gulf coast, my older sister on the West coast and me in Upstate NY, Mom and Dad decided they would age in-place at home. Over the next 5-7 years the three of us made frequent visits trying to help with our parent's increasing needs. It was a huge wake-up call for all of us. In 1992, my wife and I and our youngest of three sons moved from Rochester, NY to our home here in Vienna, VA, so I could manage Kodak's sales to the federal government until I retired in 1997. Until 2007 I served on the Board of a non-profit, National Industries for the Blind, and as a Director in their office in Alexandria.

Tall Oaks has about 140 residents, including 30 in the memory unit. After about six months visiting twice a week, I asked eight of the residents if they would be willing to serve on a Resident Advisory Committee that would meet with me monthly for an hour to discuss issues related to resident rights at Tall Oaks. They agreed, and thanks to the 24/7 eyes and ears of these committee residents, I am far better informed than I was by myself. Six months later, the Advisory Committee initiated a Resident Council, comprised of all interested residents that meets quarterly, without Tall Oaks management. Those meetings are attended by 30-40 residents and moderated by me. Questions and issues are discussed, and I get a chance to remind everyone of the Ombudsman Program.

That said, I feel my biggest challenge is still effective communications to and from residents, and most challenging of all, communicating to resident families. But coming from a competitive business environment, I have sometimes worried that I was not accomplishing enough for the residents. But I have since come to think that, like a fireman with fewer fires to fight, Ombudsmen with fewer reported problems might reflect an improving resident community.

For me this is a very rewarding job. I very much appreciate the latitude we have to apply our varied skills and personalities to the advocacy for our residents. And I know for a fact that the residents appreciate our work too.



The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all programs and services. To request reasonable accommodations or alternate formats, call 703-324-5861 (voice); 711 (TTY).

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